

**WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DIVISION &
GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM OFFICE
WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - WEEK ENDING 1/16/15**

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DIVISION

EARTH DAY TEXAS 2015: On January 13, staff of the Water Quality Protection Division met with Mr. Ken Klaveness, Director of Earth Day Texas and Mr. Matt Myers, ECO EXPO Consultant also with Earth Day Texas to share planning information for the world's largest annual public exhibition of green ideas, products, and new technologies. Earth Day Texas (EDTX) will be held April 24-25-26, at Fair Park, Dallas. EDTX is an annual free event providing a forum for businesses, non-profits, academia, and government agencies to network together and engage the public in environmental topics. This year, the estimated attendance is 70,000. The Eco-Conference will include numerous well-known speakers such as Dan Patrick, Texas Lt. Governor-Elect, Bjorn Lomborg, Author of "The Skeptical Environment, and Ryan Sitton, Texas Railroad Commissioner. Over 60 Dallas Independent School districts have committed to attend as well as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, Fort Hood, Harvard University, AgriLife, many businesses and non-profits from across the country. EDTX welcomes EPA to participate as an exhibitor and/presenter to share Region 6 "green stories" to the public. Follow up meetings to discuss EPA's role are upcoming. Terry Branch of the Partnerships and Communications Team serves as the Earth Day Texas Coordinator and the primary contact between the Region and the Earth Day Texas organization. **Eugene Thilsted, 665-2782, Terry Branch, 665-6667, Debora Browning, 665-8025, Doug Jacobson, 665-6692, Patricia Taylor, 665-6403**

OKLAHOMA RELEASES DRAFT 2014 INTEGRATED 303(d)/305(b) REPORT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT: The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality released the state's draft 2014 integrated report for public comment on December 31, 2014. This public comment period closes February 2, 2015. Region 6 staff will review and comment on this draft report, with particular focus on the state's 303(d) list of impaired waters. The public may review this draft at http://www.deq.state.ok.us/wqdnew/305b_303d/index.html. **Mike Schaub, 665-7314.**

EPA REGION 6 NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM AT THE TEXAS WATERSHED COORDINATOR'S ROUNDTABLE: On January 22, 2015, staff from the State/Tribal Program (6WQ-AT), Watershed Management (6WQ-EW) and SRF and Projects Section (6WQ-AP) will attend the Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable, at the San Antonio Water System. Discussions will focus on the NPS Grant Program, the need to properly develop Watershed Protection Plans (WPP) for efficient and effective implementation and SRF opportunities and barriers. The Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable is a product of coordinated effort, led by TWRI, to provide proper training to watershed coordinators and water professionals in order to ensure that watershed protection efforts are adequately planned, coordinated and implemented. EPA has awarded a total of \$215,801 of federal Clean Water Act (CWA) Section §319(h) funds through the TSSWCB to implement the Texas Watershed Coordinator Development Program. More information concerning the Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable is available on the TWRI webpage <http://watershedplanning.tamu.edu/>. **Henry Brewer, 665-8146; Ashley Howard, 665-7597; Brad Lamb, 665-6683; Anthony Suttice, 665-8590; Caitlain Thompson, 665-2262**

ODEQ CLASS I WELL TECHNICAL ISSUES: On January 9, 2015, the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) requested EPA's assistance regarding the continued operation of the Pryor Chemical Company's Class I non-hazardous underground injection well, located in Pryor,

Mayes County, Oklahoma. EPA and ODEQ have expressed technical concerns regarding the well's continued operation, due to its high injection pressure, the lack of plugging records for other wells in the area, the presence of local faults, and falloff test data that indicate decreased permeability near the well bore. EPA will participate in a conference call with ODEQ and the facility to discuss concerns with renewal of the facility's UIC well permit. **Lauren Ray, 665-2756; Philip Dellinger, 665-8324; Arnold Bierschenk, 665-7435**

CONFERENCE CALL ON THE LOWER RIO GRANDE WATERSHED INITIATIVE: On January 8, 2015, the TMDL, TCEQ and IBWC staff participated in a conference call to discuss the action items agreed upon during the Binational Core Group meeting held in November 2014. Specifically, the US technical team members discussed the scheduling of the model input file submittal, February and March river sampling, and sample team workshop in addition to potential schedules for two Binational Technical Work Group calls with Mexico. **Katrina Higgins-Coltrain, 665-8143.**

TEXAS DRINKING WATER ADVISORY WORK GROUP MEETING: Drinking Water Section members will participate in the January 20, 2015, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Drinking Water Advisory Work Group (DWA WG) quarterly meeting. The DWA WG meeting is held in Austin, Texas and broadcast live. The DWA WG is a group of participants that meet to discuss issues related to drinking water with emphasis on EPA and Texas regulations compliance and improving customer service. Topics discussed will include EPA's presentation on the upcoming Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) and its requirements for systems in Texas. **Amy Camacho, 665-7175; Andy Waite, 665-7332**

TEXAS WATER INFRASTRUCTURE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING, AUSTIN, TEXAS: Staff from the Drinking Water Section will travel to Austin, TX on Wednesday, January 21, 2015, to attend the bimonthly Texas Water Infrastructure Coordinating Committee (TWICC) meeting. Participants include state and federal funding agencies, technical assistance providers, waste water trade organizations, and regulatory agencies. The purpose of the meeting is to identify and develop solutions to water and waste water infrastructure compliance issues and to seek affordable, sustainable, and innovative funding strategies for protection of public health. **Amy Camacho, 665-7175**

NONPOINT SOURCE RESTORATION: BAYOU NEZPIQUE: The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) reports that they have successfully restored water quality in the Bayou Nezpieque for total dissolved solids. Louisiana worked with rice and soybean farmers to implement nutrient management and crop rotation BMPs in 10 HUC-12 sub-watersheds to reduce sediment loads to receiving waterways. As a result, 2011 water quality data showed that TDS standards were being met. State-developed NPS restoration success stories are contained in the national NPS website (http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/la_bayou.cfm) **Brad Lamb, 665-6683**

R6 SRF TEAM ATTENDED EPA HEADQUARTERS SRF TRAINING IN AUSTIN, TX AT TEXAS WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD (TWDB): EPA Headquarters provided an SRF 101 Training for TWDB SRF programs on January 12-14, 2015, in Austin, TX. A range of SRF topics were covered including programmatic, financial, and technical requirements that TWDB staff need to understand for a successful SRF program. The training was in response to reorganization of TWDB staff, numerous CWA Amendments, recent CWSRF and DWSRF program changes, and requirements resulting from GAO, OIG, OMB reviews. **Diane Taheri 665-7460; Maurice Rawls,**

665-8049; Javier Ballí, 665-7261; Gregory Parrish, 665-6586; David Reazin 665-7501; and Miriam Varnado, 665-7171.

IDENTIFYING FECAL BACTERIA SOURCES IN CAMERON PARISH, LOUISIANA BEACH WATERS: The Regional Science Council and EPA ORD have officially announced approval of a proposal for FY2015 Regionally Applied Research Effort (RARE) funds to study sources of high bacteria in beach waters of Cameron Parish, Louisiana. In this study, we will further develop a molecular toolbox that is based on the detection of active fecal bacteria in marine waters and sediment. We plan to expand the number of fecal bacteria groups targeted including bacterial fecal source identifiers (e.g., particularly seagull and cattle) from those examined in a previous study. This will include the continued analysis of the relative occurrence of fecal indicators/pathogens in water versus sediment. We will also attempt to confirm the low relevance of human sources. **Mike Schaub, 665-7314**

BEING A JUDGE AND A MENTOR: A member of the Surface Water Center will be a Judge at the FIRST Robotics Competition for high-schools students in the Irving Convention Center, Dallas on Feb 26-28. This competition is a high-tech sporting event that pits robots, each designed by teams of high school students and professional engineers during a six week period. FIRST mission is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication and leadership. NASA and many Fortune 500 companies are FIRST sponsors. The competition is free to the public.

Also, the member will represent EPA at the Southern Methodist University School of Engineering on the 15th anniversary of “Vioneering” on Feb 7th. Every year teams of middle school students from the area participate/compete in a fun and learning project in which they design and engineer the future house/environment they may live in. **Angel Kosfisz, 665- 2187**

UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK LEAKS PROJECT: A member of the Surface Water Center completed the analyses of two counties and four sites in New York State as part of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Skills Market Place project with Dennis Guignet, PhD. This project of the National Center for Environmental Economics (NCEE) in collaboration with the Office of Underground Storage Tanks (OUST) is, in part, a hedonic property value study to determine the impact of underground storage tanks (UST) leaks and cleanups on surrounding residential property values in the USA. EPA Region 6 provided extensive use of modeling in Geographical Information Systems (GIS). These four sites completed the process of 18 sites in the USA. **Angel Kosfisz, 665- 2187**

GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM OFFICE

GULF COAST COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE: The Gulf of Mexico Program Office, through the Community Liaison Initiative, has developed a Gulf Coast Community Collaborative (Collaborative). The Collaborative goals are to incite participation among citizens in protecting the environment and to create resilient communities. The group is charged with identifying issues in communities that threatens sustainability and devising a strategy for technical assistance. The Collaborative, comprised of two members per Gulf State, is structured in a manner that allows for meaningful and timely public engagement.

To gain insight on environmental issues impacting communities, the Collaborative is developing a community assessment that will be executed in a “piloted” community. The results of the community assessment will set the stage for discussions on resources needed for remediation. The Collaborative plans to develop a project in each Gulf State over the course of five years.

Staff Contact: LaKeshia Robertson or Claudette Walker

CHARM (COMMUNITY HEALTH & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT) WORKSHOPS IN

ALABAMA AND MISSISSIPPI: The final CHARM (Community Health & Resource Management) Resilience workshops will be held on January 20th and 21st. The workshops will showcase the uses of the CHARM tool and gather feedback for the participant’s expected uses. On Tuesday, January 20th more than 20 participants have registered for the Alabama workshop which is being held at the Grand Bay NERRs. On Wednesday, January 21st, another workshop will be held for the Mississippi participants. (Location TBD), and will follow the same format as the workshop at Grand Bay NERR. **Staff Contact: Jeanne Allen**

GULF GUARDIAN AWARDS NOMINATION DEADLINE EXTENDED

The Gulf Guardian Nomination deadline was extended from January 15th to COB January 30th. The date for the Gulf Guardian Award Ceremony has been set for Thursday, July 30th at the Texas State Aquarium, in Corpus Christi, Texas. Jane Watson will serve as a panelist for award submissions.

Staff Contact: Jeanne Allen

RESTORE TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT MEETING: GMPO staff represented EPA as trustee at the RESTORE Tribal Engagement meeting held at the Poarch Band of Creek Indians reservation on January 15th. Topics discussed included status of proposal review by the RESTORE Council as well as possibilities for additional project opportunities in upcoming calls for proposals from the Council. **Staff Contact: Troy Pierce**

NUTRIENT SENSOR CHALLENGE UPDATE: Nutrient Sensor Challenge Update: The Nutrient Sensor Challenge (Challenge) is a partnership (federal, state, business and non-profit) effort designed to spur market development of a water-based nutrient sensor in the \$5,000 - 10,000 US dollar range. The Challenge is now in Year 2 and is accepting sensor applications at <http://www.act-us.info/nutrients-challenge/>. **Staff Contact: Lael Butler**

MISSISSIPPI BENEFICIAL USE GROUP (MSBUG): Staff attended the first Mississippi Beneficial Use Group (MSBUG) for 2015 on Jan 14th at the MSDMR office. Approx. 50 participants (Federal, State and contractors) were present. Topics included the following: USACE Mobile- updates including the Bayou Caddy Living Shoreline project; MDMR –Mississippi Beneficial Use (MSBU) updates from Round, Greenwood and Deer Island projects; Covington/ MDEQ - Update on NFWF Marsh Creation / BU Project and Anchor QEA and an update on large scale MDMR BU project in Biloxi Marsh, LA. **Staff Contact: Jerry Boos**